

**Amendment to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. – 5. (canceled)

6. (previously presented) A scheduling management system, comprising:  
a schedule server which stores schedules of participants and schedules of equipments reserved by ones of said participants in different groups; and  
a plurality of remote client devices operatively connected to said schedule server, which allow client users to input schedules of said participants and request an idle time retrieval from said schedule server, and continuously request the idle time retrieval for a special group with a new retrieval condition, which is a previous idle time retrieval result.

7. (previously presented) The schedule management system according to Claim 6, wherein said schedule server comprises a communication controller which provides registration for a special group, and wherein said idle time is retrieved so that at least one of participants and equipments in said special group satisfies a retrieval condition for retrieving said idle time.

8. (previously presented) The schedule management system according to Claim 6, wherein said schedule server comprises a data access unit which accesses selected databases in accordance with instructions for retrieving the idle item common from said plurality of groups.

9. (new) A multistageous idle-time retrieving method comprising the steps of:  
classifying a plurality of members into a plurality of groups according to a significance degree;

comparing a first retrieval condition specifying a time zone with schedules of respective members belonging to a first group to extract idle-times of the respective members belonging to the first group;

determining whether there is any idle-time common to the extracted idle-times of the respective members belonging to the first group;

if there is any common idle-time in the determining step, extracting the common idle-time as a second retrieval condition;

comparing the second retrieval condition with schedules of respective members belonging to a second group having a significant degree lower than the significant degree of the first group to extract idle-times of the respective members belonging to the second group;

extracting idle-time common to the extracted idle-times of the respective members belonging to the second group and setting the common idle-time as a third retrieval condition; and

displaying the third retrieval condition on a display apparatus.

10. (new) A multistageous idle-time retrieving apparatus comprising:

- means for classifying a plurality of members into a plurality of groups according to a significance degree;
- means for comparing a first retrieval condition specifying a time zone with schedules of respective members belonging to a first group to extract idle-times of the respective members belonging to the first group;
- means for determining whether there is any idle-time common to the extracted idle-times of the respective members belonging to the first group and extracting the common idle-time as a second retrieval condition if there is any common idle-time;
- means for comparing the second retrieval condition with schedules of respective members belonging to a second group having a significant degree lower than the significant degree of the first group to extract idle-times of the respective members belonging to the second group;
- means for extracting idle-time common to the extracted idle-times of the respective members belonging to the second group and setting the common idle-time as a third retrieval condition; and
- means for displaying the third retrieval condition on a display apparatus.